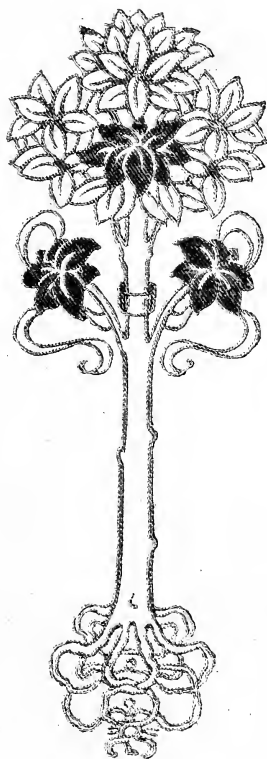


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*A Stricken City
& other Poems
by Salmon-Maclean*



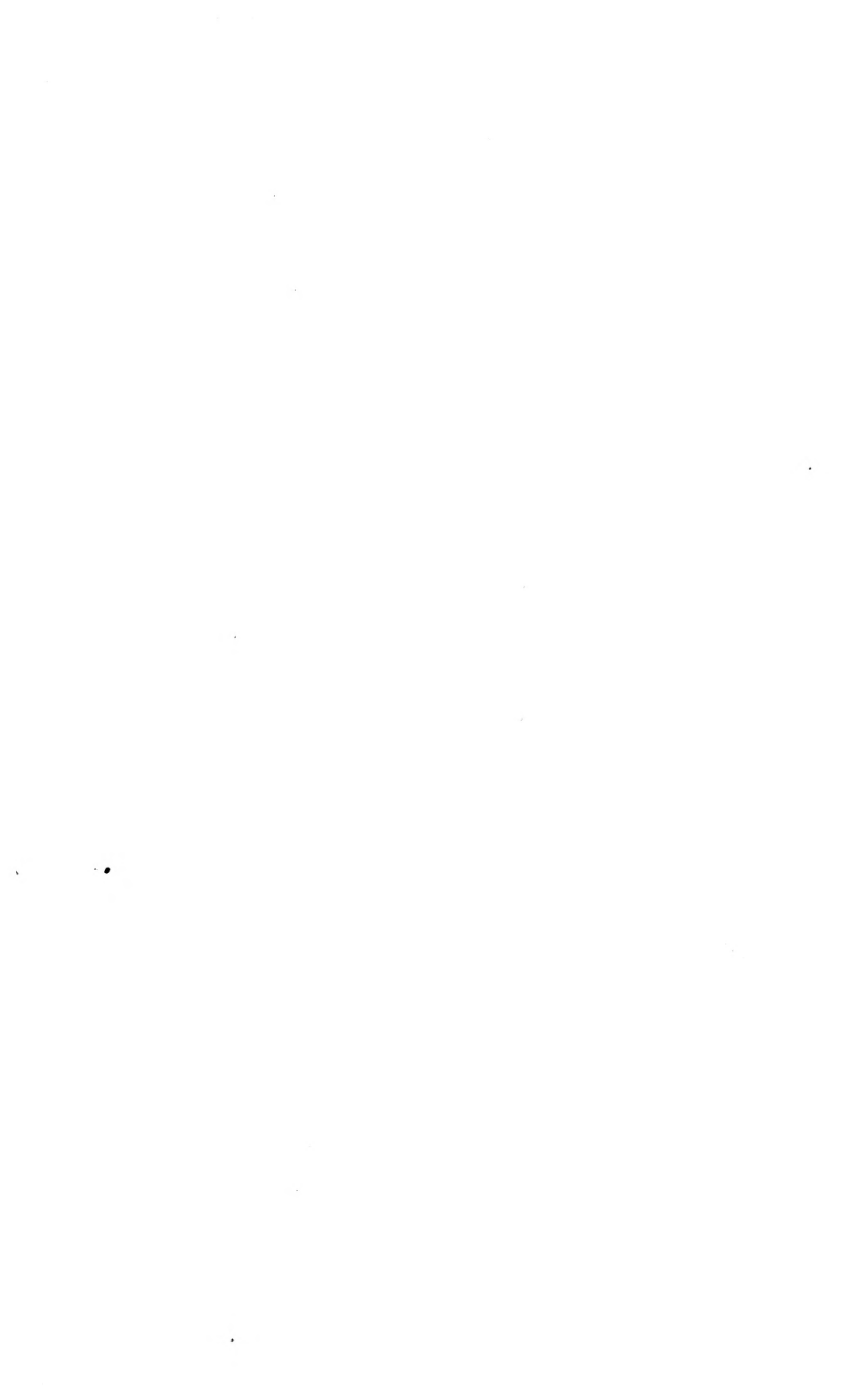


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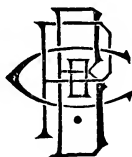
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A STRICKEN CITY

By
SALMON-MACLEAN



BROADWAY PUBLISHING CO.
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“Methinks already, from his chymic flame,
I see a city of more precious mould:
Rich as the town which gives the Indies name,
With silver paved, and all divine with gold.”
—DRYDEN.

PREFACE.

As at a gathering, social or otherwise, the audience may be astonished at the omission of the president's opening address, so some of my kind readers and friendly critics may be disappointed in not seeing a preface; whilst others (unfriendly critics, I mean,) may wonder why I haven't made a humble apology for putting such a poorly executed production into their hands. After making the following explanation, however, I trust that there will be neither disappointment on the one hand, nor amazement on the other.

I have always spent my leisure in writing verse; but I never wrote with a view to publishing any of my poems. After having completed "A Stricken City," I thought, as usual, that it was fit for *my* eyes alone; but others who happened to see it, advised me to publish it. I found it no easy task to follow that advice. I have, however, made this attempt, yet, with some amount of reluctance; and as you herein have an opportunity to judge for yourself, I leave you

to form your own opinion of it. With it, as you will see, I have published a few others, and I trust that after you have read these pieces, you will have no cause to regret having spent the time in reading them.

July 1, 1907.

S-M.

CONTENTS.

	Page.
A Stricken City.....	1
A Photograph	7
Life's Changes	10
Parted	12
Death (or the Sleep of Death).....	15
Winter	18
A Promise	20
Genius	21
The Ocean	22
On the Beach.....	27
Through Life	29

A STRICKEN CITY.

Dear Kingston! daughter of a queenly isle,
Whose brow a crown adorns, on which e'er smile
The richest trophies from those tropic seas,
And choicest emblems of her emerald leas,
Our hearts now break with sorrow to behold
Thee prostrate, mangled, lifeless like of old
Port Royal, when beneath the blows she knelt,—
Those murd'rous blows which by the Fates were
dealt.

How oft along thy streets my steps had stray'd,
And brought me weary, worn to where I laid —
My frame, a burden, whilst my spirit free
Maintain'd unequall'd war against ennui!

Methinks I hear thy coaches constant run,
A market's din, the schoolboys' noisy fun;
I hear the notes the steamhorns often play'd
At morn, at noon, at evening's growing shade:
I see thine eloquent spires all looking down
With eyes benign upon thee, fated town;

And now before me pass the rural swains,
With hastening steps along thy sunny lanes:
I feel the ire of each tropic ray,
The cooling zephyrs from across the bay,
The southern doctor from a sky-bound sea,
The northeast wind which swept thy green wall'd
lea,—

In that, the fuel of exhaustion lay;
In these, Cheer's whispers on a summer day:
Still too, the fragrant scent of many a rose,—
The wild, the cultured, which the bee once chose,
Around my memory dances; but with it
The past, the present now in sorrow flit:
Again there lingers on my thirsty tongue,
That taste delicious of the palm tree's young;
And Fancy's hand o'er stretching the broad sea
Plucks tropic fruits, which still do beckon me,—
But Mem'ry's hand had written these. Ah! now
Time's monuments are mix'd as by the plough,—
All levell'd with the sod. Can this be thou?

The twentieth century had but just begun
Her seventh annual journey 'round the sun;
Her first born fortnight wanted but nine hours
To quit forever those now des'late bowers

At midnight, when sweet sleep would nurse with
care

The weary pilgrims of that youthful year;
When as some chasèd Amazon subdued
By Phœbus' darts, the war had not renew'd;
But lying, breathing deeply, gasp'd for breath;
Then at the sight of slow advancing death
She shook convulsive, rose and fell again:
So quaked the spot which mark'd where thou
wast slain—

The earth shook long, thy homes, Oh Kingston,
fell;

And sounds not human mix'd with human yell.

The spots which mark'd the kennels of the
hounds

That cross'd the ocean plains by leaps and bounds,
There, where a country's products found them-
selves

The temporary inmates of the shelves,
Where linger'd too a cab with jealous eye
To vie with cars in courting passers-by,—
There now a death-trod field its charge conceals,
And with compulsion mangled forms reveals.
Oh! sudden, fatal was the change that led

The living to the regions of the dead,
The rich and poor to pastures new and bare,
And then together left them helpless there!

 Within those rails that bound thy garden
 square,
Surrounded by a spacious thoroughfare,
Which dust supplied the restless summer air,
In that old park whose trees and fountains enjoy'd
Sweet martial strains by war not then employ'd,
There, where a hundred sat on Sunday eve,
And like a hundred looms their tales did weave,
Where giant trees o'er lawns eternal green
And lots design'd, made art a forest scene,—
Thy choicest tropic blossoms bloom no more
There, where encamp the needy rich and poor.

 Again within that dusty circling track,
Where sped the rider on the racer's back,
There, where thy country's colors proudly
 danced
Upon the winds while passing viceroys glanced,
And generals, at the lines which belch'd forth
 fire

At Britain's beck free, not in Britons' hire,
When back they oft brought laurels from a field

Where victors capture and the vanquish'd yield,
Where chemical meteors did ascend on high
To add brief beauty to a starry sky,
Where too a desert summer made the scene
Whilst flowers, like stars, in spring did spot the
green,—

There now a homeless populace lament,
Sky this one's canopy, and that a tent.

Now meets mine eyes that stately tower just
near

Thy time-worn hippodrome, thou Kingston dear!
Within her arms her sons have slept the sleep
That told a tale of safety—angel's keep,—
How steadfast did that solitary eye
Of her good clock e'er watch the southern sky!
How oft beneath that eye with care they play'd,
They fondest wielders of the willow blade!
O ne'er can Chance erase fair Mem'ry's hand,
Which Fortune kindly guided with her wand,
As Time dictated fast, for lines, the days:
(She then did lend my steps her guiding rays.)

Afar, I see the proud Blue Mountain's head
With ashes cover'd, now that thou are dead:
He sees thee prostrate on that couch beside

The bottled waters of the ocean tide.
The gown of emerald lawn he gaveth thee,
Is now in blood-stain'd rags; o'er thee I see
A mantle weaved of smoke and dust and fire.
Thy tomb would ne'er carved epitaph require;
Thyself, the epitaph, wouldst fittest be;
Thy tomb, thyself, will stretch beside the sea;
For Phœnix-like thou Kingston soon wilt rise
Again a city fair to mortal eyes,
And as the feather'd tribes do meet in court
To greet the new-born Phœnix: so in port
The ocean hounds, the winds, each coming wave
Will join to hail thee victor o'er the grave.

A PHOTOGRAPH.

The background was of darkish gray,
A screen with fret-work crown'd; there lay
Upon the ground a bear, the beast,
On which sat Beauty (what a feast!)
The pane forbade a finger's touch;
For is it ancient Beauty, such
As 'thiopian chemists kept exempt
From worm's assault, and the attempt
Of Time's revenge on mortal clay,
When lifeless in the grave it lay?
Or the conception of a mind
Own'd by a sculptor? Or the find
Of painter's diligence? Or aught
That breathes now, and remains unsought
By Beauties' worshippers? O'er that
Unwrinkled brow, at rest there sat
A tuft of golden fibres, bent
Along where once the scissors went.
Her ears, her cheeks, her shoulders found

A crypt beneath the gold locks, bound
About the forehead with a fine
Blue ribbon, like a curtain's twine.
Beneath a Roman nose, a red
Line mark'd the place, whence freely sped
Once words nectareal that brought
Those, who a honey'd recluse sought.
What delicate lips! they seem to say,
For eyes which look'd so large, that they
Bestow'd but pity for a love,
Blest attribute of One above.
A few steps backwards, but to view
From crown to sole her form anew,
Betray'd a smile, which, once conceal'd,
But now to me her heart reveal'd,
A mother's heart in breast mature;
'Neath, arms bereft of one she bore;
For there behind, hung from the wall
An "In Memoriam" with a pall
With artist's pencil drawn. But no
Etiolation mars the glow,
Which mark'd a face that lit earth's waste.
Like cincture, round her slender waist,
Or half way, barèd arms lay still,

•
No longer servants of her will.
Her breast was bare, save from her nape
There hung a cross, her only rape
From Vesta's cloister bright ; hung loose
From curving shoulders fabric, whose
Translucent texture, brown, reveal'd
A flowing robe, in vain conceal'd.

LIFE'S CHANGES.

This eve how changed seems nature!

But that must I believe?

Just look beside the door-step,

That green foot-trodden leaf,

That grafted branch, that seal'd bud,

Were not there yestereve.

The grass that paved the pathway,

The bramble and the thorn

Which vied to catch the passer,

Had many a hope forlorn;

But they were levell'd, levell'd

At this day's budding morn.

The bells that tuned last evening,

The organ's notes, the pray'r,

The pious crowds, deserted shops,

The pastor's pulpit-tear,—

These are forgot, supplanted;

By what? See everywhere:

A city's buzzing millions,
And criers of the town,
The chamber'd gambler, drunkard,
The cafe's pamper'd clown,
The sickman's hope, the prisoner's,
A rector not in gown,—

These eager chase the finish
Of toils they'll seek again,
Toils which make busy nations,
And will, too, future men,
They dressing modern methods
In garbs of future ken.

This eve will be but yester,
And modern ancient days;
This present youth will mellow,
And bathe in Autumn's rays;
And these our songs will echo
Then, as but ancient lays.

PARTED.

'Twas midnight. On the gray shore
I sat; and as I cast
My eyes o'er the Atlantic,
I 'spied a lonely mast.

But then, my thoughts sought farther
To spot a distant home
Beyond these furrow'd waters,
Within the tropic foam.

As Phœbus gazed at Cynthia,
And she at him again,
She smiled, and smiling shew'd me
The silver of the main.

My eyes fix'd on the waters,
My thoughts dwelt steadfast still
Within that cozy cottage,
Upon a shady hill.

In fancy's dream, I enter'd
That same familiar cot;
And those I left I found asleep,
But one; lo! he was not.

A youth, whose soul had hurried
Across Death's dreaded stream
Was absent: 'neath a willow,
He still does sleep and dream.

But by his side are sleeping
His mother, sister; they
Did give him parting kisses,
And he his loved one, May.

His tears were rills, detaining
The parting of his kin;
But May's for him were rivers,
E'en where they did begin.

Methinks, I hear him speaking,
And see him by my side;
Or, is it that my senses
Deceive and me deride?

I censure not the change that
Has taken from my side
A friend, and left a shadow
That whispers to the tide.

But whilst alone I linger,
I sorrow o'er the loss,
While, as the ships the billows,
My craft life's surges toss.

A few years more, and ever
I yet may sit and sing
Beside him, while his fingers
Again vibrate the string.

DEATH (OR THE SLEEP OF DEATH).

A monster, Death? weep not my child,
No monster rules the world;
Do pulpits show a monster with
A battle's flag unfurl'd?

Death, monster? No! a sleep prolong'd,
No horror 'tis to die;
Is sleep, sweet sleep, a horror, when
In bed thy frame doth lie?

Know'st thou the time when Nature's nurse
Doth steal thy senses? Child!
Dost thou dread sleep, or welcome sleep,
When weary from the wild?

Refresh'd or weary still, when thou
Behold'st the sun at morn?
Regrettest thou that kindly sleep
Repair'd thy senses torn:

Torn by a disappointment sad,
Then comforted by sighs?
What cares thee worry when in sleep's
Kind arms thy body lies?

To die, to sleep; if pain to die,
Then pain to fall asleep;
To sleep, a mortal is to rise;
To die, to sleep, sleep, sleep.

What then dread'st thou? If pain,
The pain as consequence
Existeth not; but 'tis the cause
Of death that gives th' offence.

If pain, at death, doth give offence,
Then death but pain defeats,
By snatching from pain's thongs the soul,
Which but to th' heavens fleets.

To die, to change: the soul but quits
Its earthly home; awake
From sleep: the soul returns; awake
Not: soul its flight doth take.

Sweet sleep? sweet death; dread death? dread
sleep:

How plain! live happy, child!

Let not a teacher horrid make

What is but sweet and mild.

WINTER.

Quickly stepping with the year,
Bearded, frowning, worn with care,
 Winter came,
Breathing icy breath on me,
Casting white sheets o'er the lea—
 What a shame!

Birdies, quitting desert lands,
Sail'd away in hungry bands
 To my door;
For their food supplies were lost
Underneath the snow and frost—
 Winter's floor.

Naked trees with outstretch'd arms,
Standing in deserted farms,
 Wept beneath
Winter's burden white and cold;
And the stones each had a mould—
 Brittle sheath.

Weary, sad, and weak, the year
Breathed his last, and then a tear
 Winter shed;
But he smiled to see the morn,
When a little babe was born
 To the dead.

Midnight voices fill'd the air,
And the birth of a new year
 They proclaim'd;
Then came next old Winter's end,
Locks all hoary, without friend,
 And ill-famed.

A PROMISE.

The helpless needy asks just aid,
A promise gets to wear ;
A blessing gives, if ne'er does fade
That promise' budding ear.

Too many a promise worthless is,
Its giver, Falsehood's page ;
Yet there are wither'd promises,
Which shrivel with their age.

As fickle minds (unwish'd, forsooth)
Expected age may blast :
So budding hope, in weather'd youth,
May die ; and all's a past.

Oh ! trust not then a promise, friend !
Its giver false may be ;
If honest, just one change may end
A seeming certainty.

GENIUS.

Thou, mount! that lift'st thy head above
In conference with a God of love,
Fit symbol of the genius—man,
Whose place is fixèd, in God's plan,
Within thy bushy head abide
Hid founts of cooling streams, which glide
To thirsty minds in endless tide.
Blessing and blest, rever'd and grand,
His name re-echoes through the land;
Immortal, for his wit shall flow
In ceaseless currents here below.

THE OCEAN.

Thou ocean! fountain of the floating seas,
Dread ocean! roar, and fill the tensive shores
With those sweet strains a prairie is denied.
There, feather'd songsters and the restless winds
Do entertain their sylvan guests at will;
Here, now at ebb, thy gentle ripples sound
Their whisp'ring notes, while little fishes sport.
Are not those soften'd strains the music, which,
At flow, the merry waves but render loud
And long, with their almighty tenor cords?
The little spies, the grains of sand, which move
Obedient to the weakest of thy waves,
Are ready to betray the trail of him,
Who treads the borders of thy vast domain.

How mighty and majestic are those waves
That monster-like thy troubled breast patrol!
As when some sinewy giant, choked with rage,
With eyes like brazen cannons shelter'd by

Those dismal brows, cliffs that defy approach,
Attacks a youth of feeble parts, who yields
For fear of deadly blows, and e'er ascends
Obedient to the force of giant arms—
When absent stubbornness, beseeching wails
Defeat the threats of storm, and freedom win:
So oaken barges, steel clad ships outlive
The anger of thy deaf'ning surges wild.
The storm abates, and then thy tamèd breast
Doth heave no more with anger: now assuaged,
Thy waters nurse, with tenderest care, the small
Frail craft a schoolboy's hand too loves to shape.
The yacht-nursed newly married couple ride
Through merry winds that cheer them on their
 way;
And safe upon thy breast, their honeymoon
The bride and bridegroom spend—a life's sweet
 morn.

When from some earthly pinnacle mine eyes
Survey the fields of snowy foam, when, too,
On high, I see the sprays from reefs ascend
And fall in showers upon thy harrow'd breast,
My thoughts desert me there, and quickly speed

To pay due homage to Him, who endow'd
Thee, Ocean! with such liberty and pow'r—
To sleep, to rage like demons, to destroy
A fleet in sport, a Holland to annoy.

For many a day thy pathless way I trod
With certain steps; and nightly, on thy breast
My spirit left its body to its own
Uncertain fate. O glorious! glorious sight!
When Phoebe's pale-faced maids did trip the
light

Fantastic toe upon thy silv'ry floor,
In joy for the absence of the shades.
Once through the curtains of a darksome night,
A ray did peep at me, it movèd on;
And hours reluctant brought thy curvèd breast,
A hillock, but to hide me from that gaze:
A distant ship did guide that slowly setting star
Across that treach'rous wilderness of thine;
And me, too, safe beneath a similar eye,
A cyclops carried not to caves, but o'er.
'Twas Beauty's child, that scene the lord of day
Did show the west upon that cloudless morn,
When slowly, he his golden curtains moved,

To say good morning to a waking world.
His cheerful smile thy bosom glad return'd,
And heaven join'd the happy earth, as she
Did laugh in mock of Nox's speedy flight.
But wise, Nox left to watch the fields she fled
Her maids, those shadows of each dark'ning
form

That e'er must pass before day's bright-eyed
lord.

Gray sea weeds, waters dark and warmer than
Thy station'd waters, stretch'd for miles before
My wand'ring eyes for many a creeping hour ;
But absent foams and stubborn waves betray'd
The heavy Gulf Stream of an ocean plain.
Earth then to me was nothing but one field
Of living water ; sky and sea, my ship
And crew were all the universe contain'd.
No hills did kiss the distant sky, till days,
Not hours, brought back approaching emerald
fields,
And made earth, sea and land—not ocean all.

Blest home of man ! where health and free-
dom meet,

Best home on earth thy bosom freely gives
Far from invading friends, the wiles of foes,
Earth's gossip and political intrigues.
Competing trade a thought, and not a form,
Leaves to thy care its fleets rich and unarm'd.
Arts, science live; but on thee leave no trace,
Save, near the shore, the beacon, which must
keep

His lonely watch, while weary mortals sleep,
Save hulkless masts that mark too many a grave,
Or straying derelicts some ship deserts—
Save these, no trace doth mark the vain attempt
To bring thy realm within man's sceptred sway.

ON THE BEACH.

The morning pregnant with bright hopes,
Breathes thoughts of deeds to be ;
The day wears, and on the gray sand,
The artists leave to me

The monuments of their day's toil—
A hero's bust, fair Beauty's dame—
Then shades of night conceals the child
Of a genius born to fame.

But Nature's tears may leave behind
Their prints for vanished joy ;
As mischief, envy, others too
Might mar or e'er destroy

The toil of hours, patience, skill,
In one black night, though morn
Reveals the work of one alone,
Who toil'd with hopes forlorn

The day before. Thus nothing marks
The lives of many here sent ;
Whilst fortunate one's work remains
His faithful monument.

The site bereft of many a form,
Which was the child of toil,
Supplies to future labor space
That ne'er may know a foil.

So on, and on, on Time's wrought sand,
The ages can but claim
Of monuments few that have stood
True to immortal fame.

THROUGH LIFE.

i.

Through life what num'rous vistas hail
Our ever greedy eyes!
From days when budding, pruning are
Devoted to our rise,
Till autumn's prime, till winter's gloom,
Or till life seeks the skies!

ii.

The seminary promises
Nought of our schoolroom's lore,
Not wealth of knowledge cull'd from books
Does constitute its store;
But there a soul is train'd to live
A life, forevermore.

iii.

There God Himself moulds soul and frame,
Till to the world there goes,

Free from his daily task, a child;
And there in calm repose,
Preparing for earth's wanderings,
Its labors, pleasures, throes,

iv.

He patient learns. Next schooldays give
The world a well train'd soul,
A pupil out on holiday,
Now free from pole to pole
To roam, till intermission brings
The hour for call of roll.

v.

If sleep eternal—Nature's nurse—
Applies soft drugs, and ferries
Across the stream a promised guest
To earth's fair fields, and buries
The studious head on downy rest,
Then from the world's sure worries

vi.

Fate keeps the child the gods will not,
For love, give up to pine,

And, like most mortals, bow beneath
A load, for which the fine
Inflicted ends attempts to move
The anger o' the Divine.

vii.

Awake, recess but finds the youth
A shy one, and unskill'd
To rough the roughs, who hold the street;
But soon, bold and self-will'd,
He enters glad life's stage, and plays
His part now plucky fill'd.

viii.

The virtues and the vices, which
Make up each act, each scene,
His heart make eden; for therein,
The good, and bad between
He now discriminates, lo! wise,
An Adam! or his Eve!

ix.

Still morning's rays bring forth glad hopes
Of coming noon, when gay

The world moves, as at flow, and shows
The zenith of the day,
Ere which the thoughts of love begin
To bless life's blooming May.

x.

The heart divided, lists to two,
To Venus', Duty's voice;
And tether'd by the two, between
Both he now shifts his choice;
Whilst Venus might Adonis choose,
And with that lone rejoice.

xi.

Love, king of hearts, a despot rules;
His subjects mortals are;
Some true, like gamblers, like the trump,
And find it e'en afar,
And win, must win; but why? May be
The idols of some star.

xii.

Youth looks on Love with wistful eyes,
And welcomes life's May-day;

And May-day folks too pray the sun
Would loiter on his way;
Whilst eve nectareal made, remains
Sweet savor'd, fresh, and gay.

xiii.

The noonday sun now brings new scenes
To the insatiate mind;
And as the sidewalks offer free
Their bosoms there to find
Sights novel, he surveys them, till
His breath does kiss as wind.

xiv.

Too hospitable, pleased to see
Itself a kind support,
Where two ways cross, there one tall pile
A subject keeps for sport
Him, leaning, courting Nature's nurse—
Twin sister *de la Mort*.

xv.

A member of the fairer sex,
With eye behind her lens,

Pretending that she can supply
All women's wants and men's,
Descrying that he shades her sign,
Raves at his want of sense.

xvi.

Then Clamor's voice dispels the nurse,
But fort'nate she has wrought
With soothing touches—Nature's balm—
A cure on senses fraught
With crowded scenes and deafening cries,
Which come e'en though unsought.

xvii.

His nerves now husband'd by control
Of his now waken'd will,
He sets his curious nature free
His greedy mind to fill,
Along the ways of men again,
Till all the world grows still.

xviii.

If prince, demeanor princely smiles
On toil as on they plod,

And learns to feel, and do, and think,
 With delvers of the sod;
But still his manner must betray
 One born to wield the rod.

xix.

Next, he who drinks the cup of ease
 And privilege combined,
Whose ancestor might well have drunk
 Care's cup with hoping mind,
May now, exempt from the large fold,
 Be too small for the find.

xx.

It matters not which ever rank
 Does spend the holiday,
Free from the schoolroom's discipline;
 There comes the evening's gray,
When shadows eastern darken first,
 When fades the western ray.

xxi.

The stag no more fears shot and pack;
 The hills re-echo not;

The feather'd nations slumber glad,
And bless their happy lot,
Survivors of a day's besiege—
The hunter's futile plot.

xxii.

The garden weeps as evening's gray
Bathes it with silent tears;
No longer petted and caress'd,
Each rosebud sadly stares
Around upon a plain faced lot,
Whose face a green veil wears.

xxiii.

Such hobbies and earth's duties leave
The day's benighted hours
To grave reflections, or glad thoughts
Of victory won; then lowers
The veil, which hides the world from those
Who now, like fading flowers,

xxiv.

Perfume the world with precedence,
Leave fruits to mark their day;

And one by one each wither'd sense
Falls from each mortal clay,
Till cold and lifeless here on earth,
Bereft of life, they lay.

xxv.

On these such scenes and passing acts,
The youth does feed his mind;
And while his part he plays, he leaves
Impressions, which must find
Some retina, some tympanum
To keep their prints behind.

xxvi.

His sun sets too, at roll-call he
Presents himself, now spent;
And from his weary toil and care,
Which long his wanderings lent,
He now resigns to live again
On godly purpose bent.

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